

# Using the Child Outcomes Summary Form (COSF)

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April 9, 2010

# What we'll cover

- ▶ Why collect outcomes data
- ▶ Understanding the 3 functional child outcomes
- ▶ Assessing the 3 functional child outcomes
- ▶ How to use the COSF



# Goal of early intervention

“...To enable young children to be active and successful participants during the early childhood years and in the future in a variety of settings – in their homes with their families, in child care, in preschool or school programs, and in the community.”

(from Early Childhood Outcomes Center,  
[http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~eco/pdfs/eco\\_outcomes\\_4-13-05.pdf](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~eco/pdfs/eco_outcomes_4-13-05.pdf))



# Why Collect Outcomes Data?



# Why collect outcomes data?

Aggregated data on outcomes are important for state and local purposes.

- To document program effectiveness
- To improve programs
  - Identify strengths and weaknesses
  - Allocate support resources, such as technical assistance



# Three Child Outcomes

- ▶ Positive social–emotional skills (including social relationships)
- ▶ Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication)
- ▶ Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs



# Understanding the Three Child Outcomes



# Functional outcomes


- ▶ Not domains-based, not separating child development into discrete areas (communication, gross motor, etc.)
- ▶ Refer to behaviors that integrate skills across domains
- ▶ Can involve multiple domains
- ▶ Emphasize how the child is able to carry out meaningful behaviors in a meaningful context



# Children have positive social relationships

- ▶ Involves:
  - Relating with adults
  - Relating with other children
  - For older children, following rules related to groups or interacting with others
- ▶ Includes areas like:
  - Attachment/separation/autonomy
  - Expressing emotions and feelings
  - Learning rules and expectations
  - Social interactions and play

# Children acquire and use knowledge and skills

- Thinking
  - Reasoning
  - Remembering
  - Problem solving
  - Using symbols and language
  - Understanding physical and social worlds
- Includes:
- Early concepts—symbols, pictures, numbers
  - Imitation
  - Object permanence
  - Expressive language and communication
  - Early literacy
- 

# Children take appropriate action to meet their needs

- ▶ Involves:
  - Taking care of basic needs
  - Getting from place to place
  - Using tools (e.g., fork, toothbrush, crayon)
  - In older children, contributing to their own health and safety
- ▶ Includes:
  - Integrating motor skills to complete tasks
  - Self-help skills (e.g., dressing, feeding, grooming, toileting, household responsibility)
  - Acting on the world to get what one wants



# Assessing the Three Functional Child Outcomes

# DEC recommended practices for assessment

- ▶ Involve multiple sources
  - Examples: family members, professional team members, service providers, caregivers
- ▶ Involve multiple measures
  - Examples: observations, criterion- or curriculum-based instruments, interviews, norm-referenced scales, informed clinical opinion, work samples



# Assessment practices appropriate for outcomes measurement: ASHA

ASHA recommended practices:

- Gather information from families, teachers, other service providers
- Collect child-centered, contextualized, descriptive, functional information

(American Speech–Language–Hearing Association, 2005)



# Assessment instruments

- ▶ Assessment tools can inform us about children's functioning in each of the three outcome areas
- ▶ Challenge: There is no assessment tool that assesses the three outcomes directly



# Assessing functional outcomes

- ▶ What does the child usually do?
- ▶ Actual performance across settings and situations
- ▶ How the child uses his/her skills to accomplish tasks
- ▶ *Not* the child's capacity to function under unusual or ideal circumstances
- ▶ *Not* necessarily the child's performance in a structured testing situation

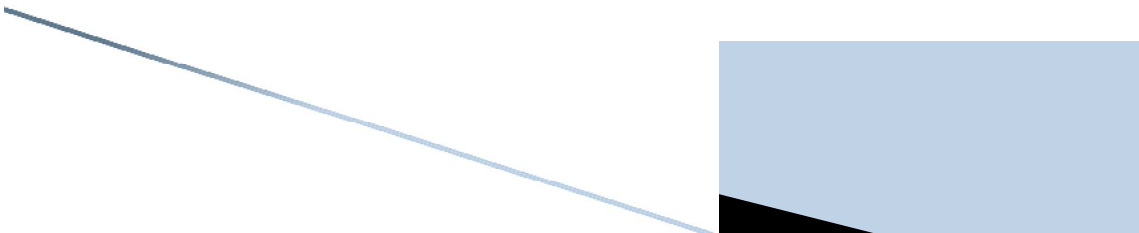


# Using information from assessment tools

- ▶ The ECO Center has “crosswalked” assessment tools to the outcomes
- ▶ Crosswalks show which sections of assessment tools are related to each outcome
- ▶ Having many items does not necessarily mean the assessment captures functioning across settings



Exercise:  
What are functional skills and behaviors?



# Decisions about Measuring Child Outcomes in DC Preschool Programs



# The Child Outcomes Summary Form (COSF)



# Why is the COSF needed?

- ▶ No assessment instrument assesses the three outcomes directly
- ▶ Different programs will be using different assessment instruments, and outcome data will need to be aggregated across programs



# Features of the COSF

- ▶ 7–point rating scale
- ▶ Rating is based on the child's functioning:
  - What the child does across settings and situations
  - Compared with what is expected given the child's age



# The two COSF questions

- a. To what extent does this child show age-appropriate functioning, across a variety of settings and situations, on this outcome? (Rating: 1–7)
- b. Has the child shown any new skills or behaviors related to [this outcome] since the last outcomes summary? (Yes–No)

# Essential knowledge for completing the COSF

Between them, team members must:

1. Understand the content of the three child outcomes
2. Know about the child's functioning across settings and situations
3. Understand age-expected child development
4. Understand age expectations for child functioning within the child's culture
5. Know how to use the rating scale



# 7 Points on the Rating Scale



## 7 – Completely

- ▶ Child shows functioning expected for his or her age in all or almost all everyday situations that are part of the child's life.
- ▶ Functioning is considered appropriate for his or her age.
- ▶ No one has any concerns about the child's functioning in this outcome area.



## 6 – Between completely and somewhat

- ▶ Child's functioning generally is considered appropriate for his or her age but there are some significant concerns about the child's functioning in this outcome area.
- ▶ These concerns are substantial enough to suggest monitoring or possible additional support.
- ▶ Although age-appropriate, the child's functioning may border on not keeping pace with age expectations.



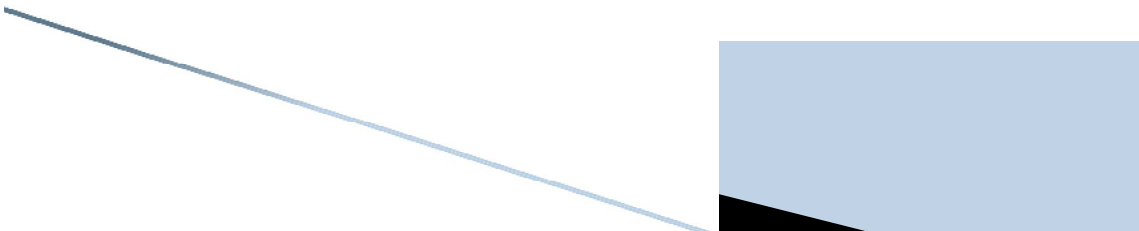
## 5 – Somewhat

- ▶ Child shows functioning expected for his or her age some of the time and/or in some settings and situations.
- ▶ Child's functioning is a mix of age-appropriate and not age-appropriate behaviors and skills.
- ▶ Child's functioning might be described as like that of a slightly younger child.



## 4 – Between a 5 and a 3

- ▶ Child shows occasional age-appropriate functioning across settings and situations.
- ▶ More functioning is not age-appropriate than age-appropriate.



# 3 – Nearly

- ▶ Child does not yet show functioning expected of a child of his or her age in any situation.
- ▶ Child uses immediate foundational skills, most or all of the time, across settings and situations. Immediate foundational skills are the skills upon which to build age-appropriate functioning.
- ▶ Functioning might be described as like that of a younger child



## 2 – Between 3 and 1

- ▶ Child occasionally uses immediate foundational skills across settings and situations.
- ▶ More functioning reflects skills that are not immediate foundational than are immediate foundational.



# 1 – Not yet

- ▶ Child does not yet show functioning expected of a child his or her age in any situation.
- ▶ Child's functioning does not yet include immediate foundational skills upon which to build age-appropriate functioning.
- ▶ Child functioning reflects skills that developmentally come before immediate foundational skills.
- ▶ Child's functioning might be described as like that of a much younger child



# Practice Example I: Using the Child Outcomes Summary Form



# The process for answering questions 1a, 2a, 3a

Discuss the child's current functioning in this outcome area across settings and situations

Identify areas where the child's functioning is age appropriate

If not all functioning is age appropriate, identify areas where the child's functioning reflects immediate foundational skills

Decide which rating best describes the child's current functioning

# Where to focus in deciding the rating

- ▶ Focus on the child's overall functioning across settings and situations
- ▶ Functioning that is displayed rarely and/or when the child is provided with a lot of unusual support or prompts is of little significance for the rating

# Key points

- ▶ Improved functioning is defined as acquiring one new skill or behavior
- ▶ Children who receive the same rating at entry and exit will show improved functioning
- ▶ The COSF “b” question distinguishes between progress category a and b

# Documenting the rating

- ▶ On the form, you will need to document:
  - What evidence led to the selected rating, evidence of .....
    - Age expected functioning?
    - Immediate foundational skills
    - Skills and behaviors that will lead to foundational skills
  - Who participated in the conversation and the decision.
- ▶ Documentation provides a record of the rationale for the rating decision

# Why is it important to document the rating?

- ▶ Evidence can be reviewed to see whether people are using the system properly (i.e., rating similar children in the same ways)
- ▶ Documentation helps identify needs for future training and technical assistance
- ▶ Documentation may be useful for new team members reviewing the file

# Understanding Progress Categories

# Three Child Outcomes

Percentage of children who:

- a. Did not improve functioning
- b. Improved functioning, but not sufficient to move nearer to functioning comparable to same-aged peers
- c. Improved functioning to a level nearer to same-aged peers but did not reach it
- d. Improved functioning to reach a level comparable to same-aged peers
- e. Maintained functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers

**3 outcomes x 5 “measures” = 15 numbers**





# Key Point

- ▶ The categories describe types of progress children can make between entry and exit
- ▶ Two scores or ratings (entry and exit) are needed to calculate a child's progress



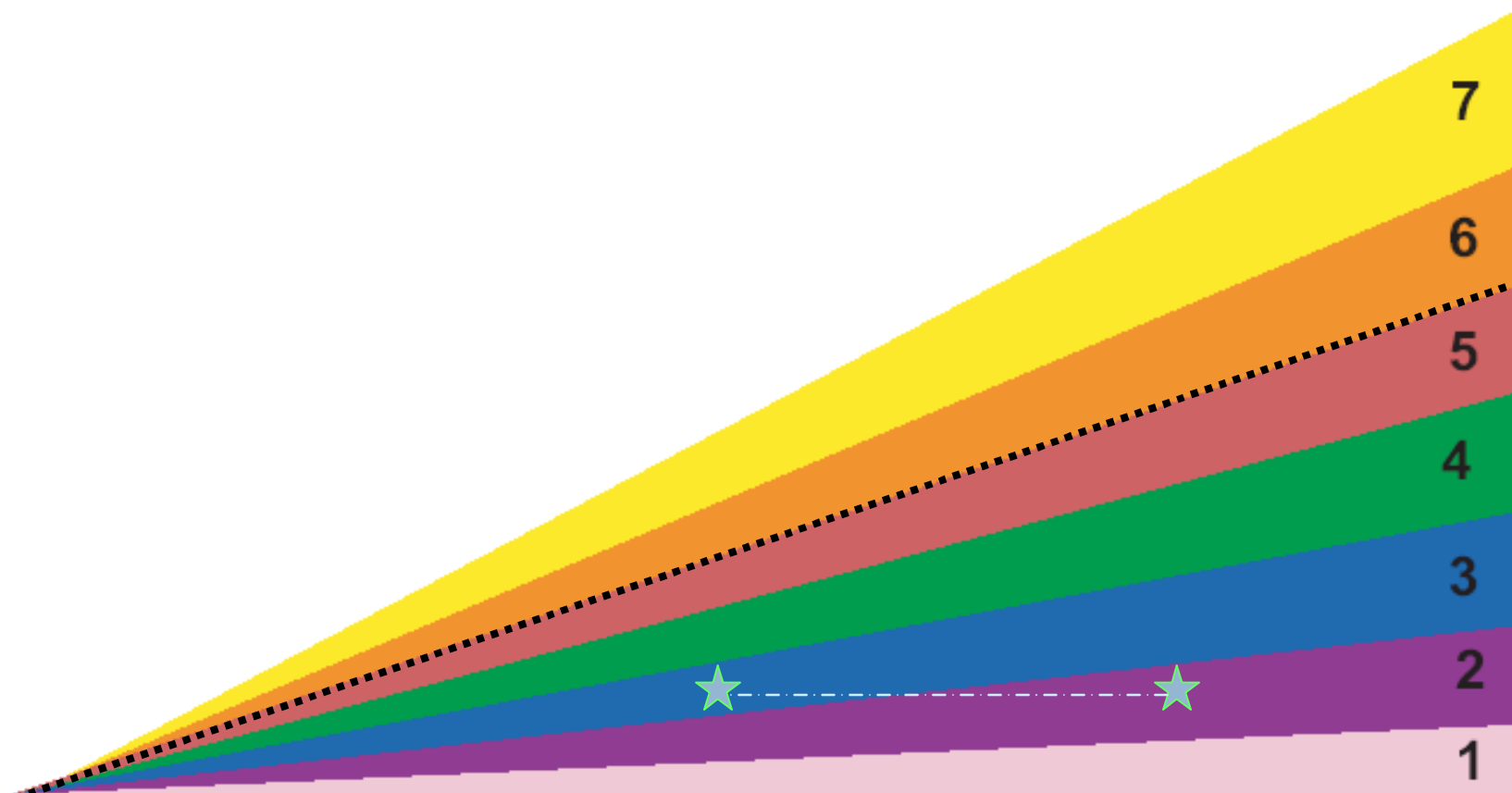
# The “a” category

## a. Percent of preschool children who did not improve functioning

- Children who acquired no new skills or regressed during their time in the program
- Didn't gain or use even one new skill
- Children with degenerative conditions/ significant disabilities

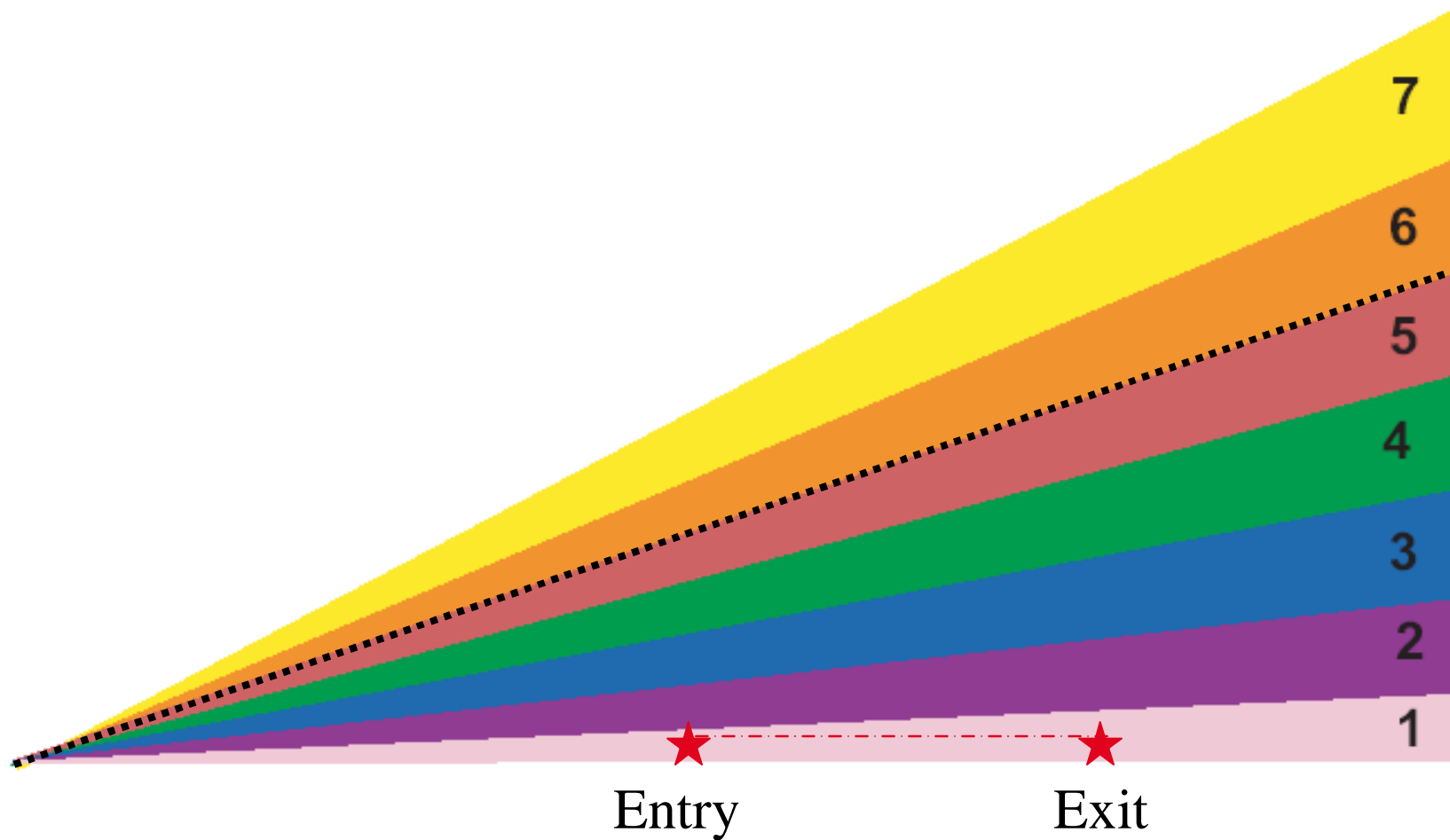


# Developmental Trajectories



Age in Months

# Developmental Trajectories



Age in Months

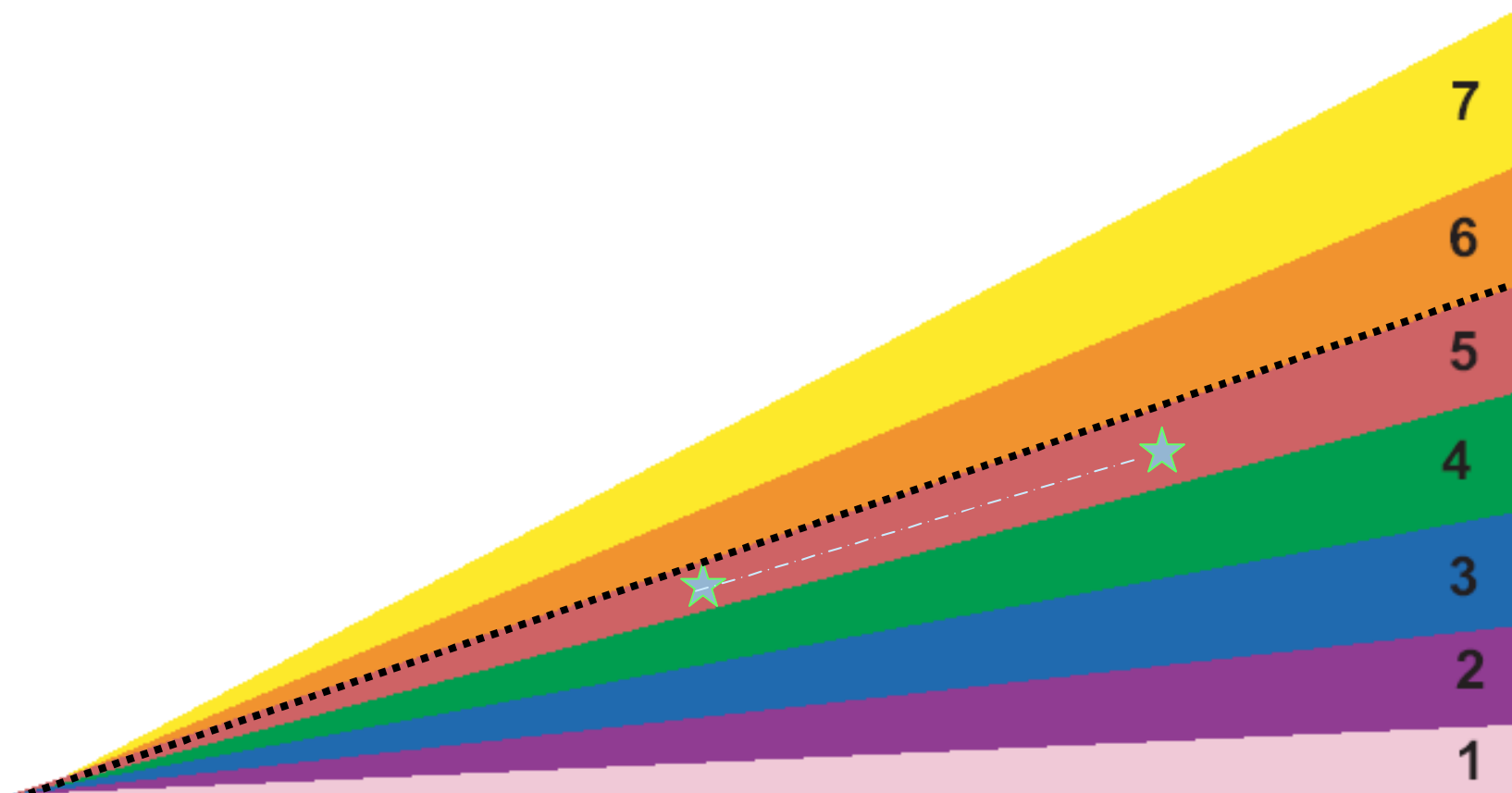
# The “b” category

b. Percent of preschool children who improved functioning but not sufficient to move nearer to functioning comparable to same-aged peers

- Children who acquired new skills but continued to grow at the same rate throughout their time in the program
- Gained and used new skills but did not increase their rate of growth or change their growth trajectories while in services



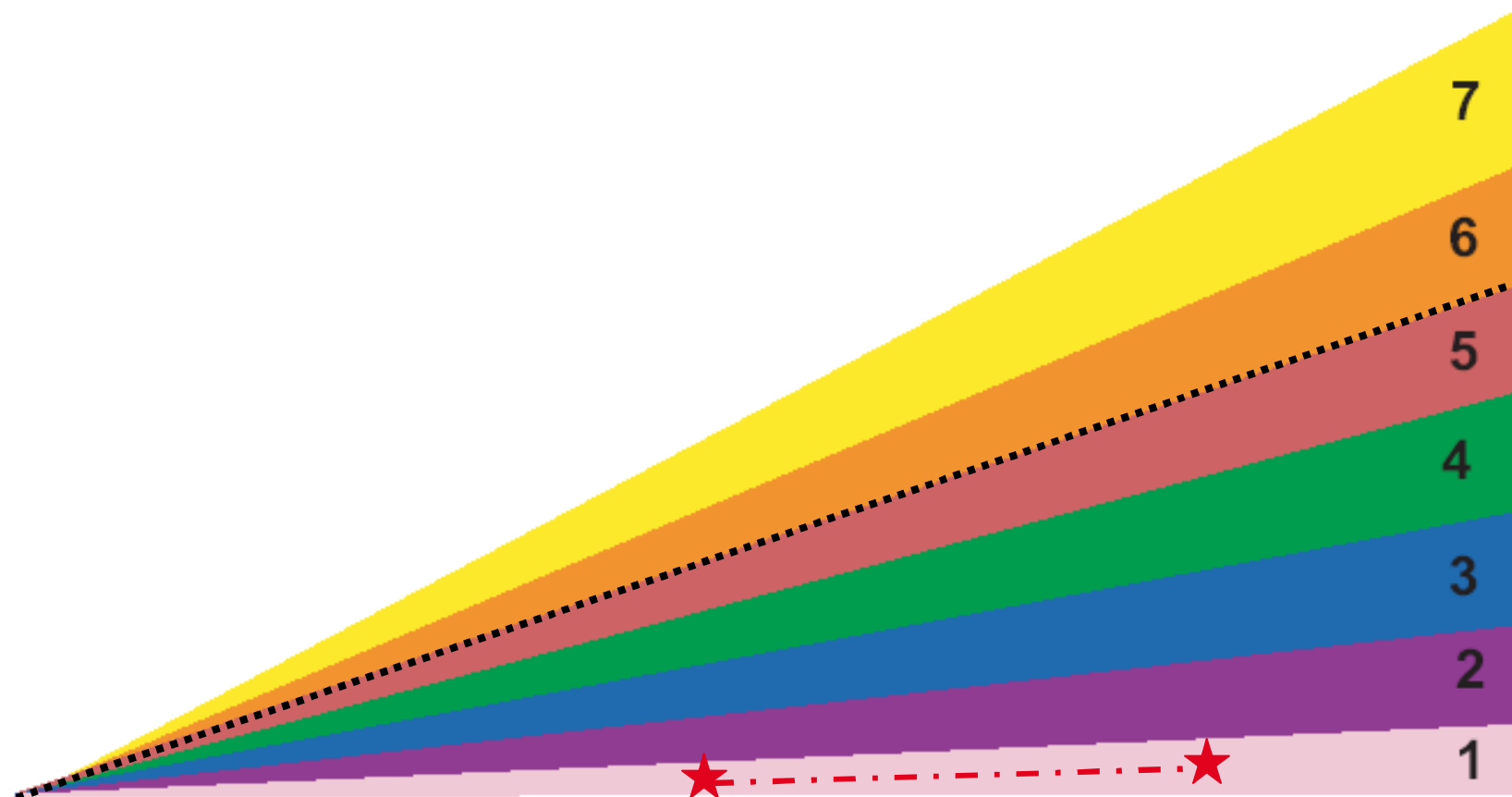
# Developmental Trajectories



Age in Months

Entry Exit

# Developmental Trajectories



Age in Months

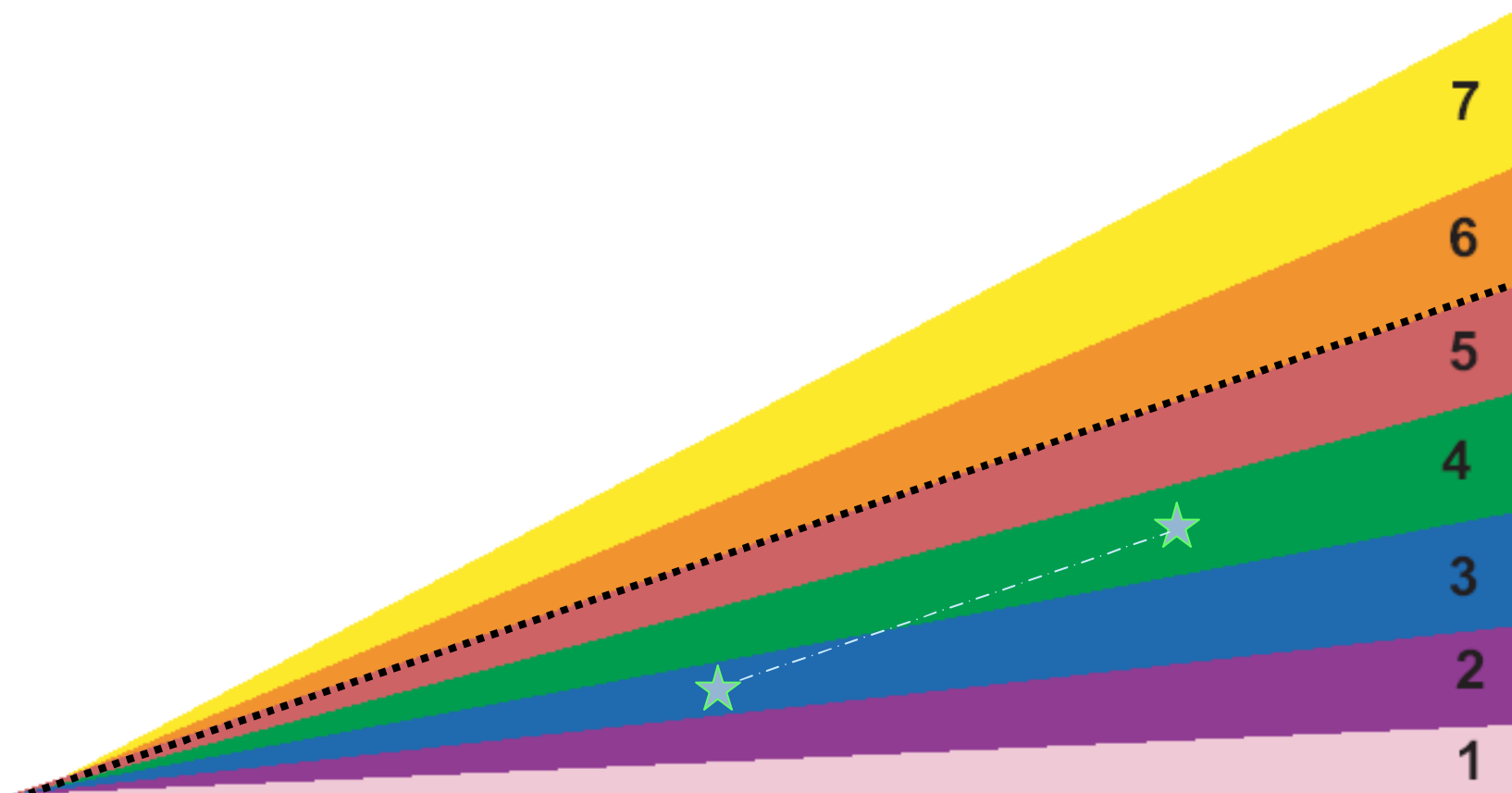
# The “c” category

- c. Percent of preschool children who improved functioning to a level nearer to same-aged peers but did not reach it
- Children who acquired new skills but accelerated their rate of growth during their time in the program
  - Made progress toward catching up with same aged peers but were still functioning below age expectations when they left the program
  - Changed their growth trajectories --“narrowed the gap”





# Developmental Trajectories



Age in Months

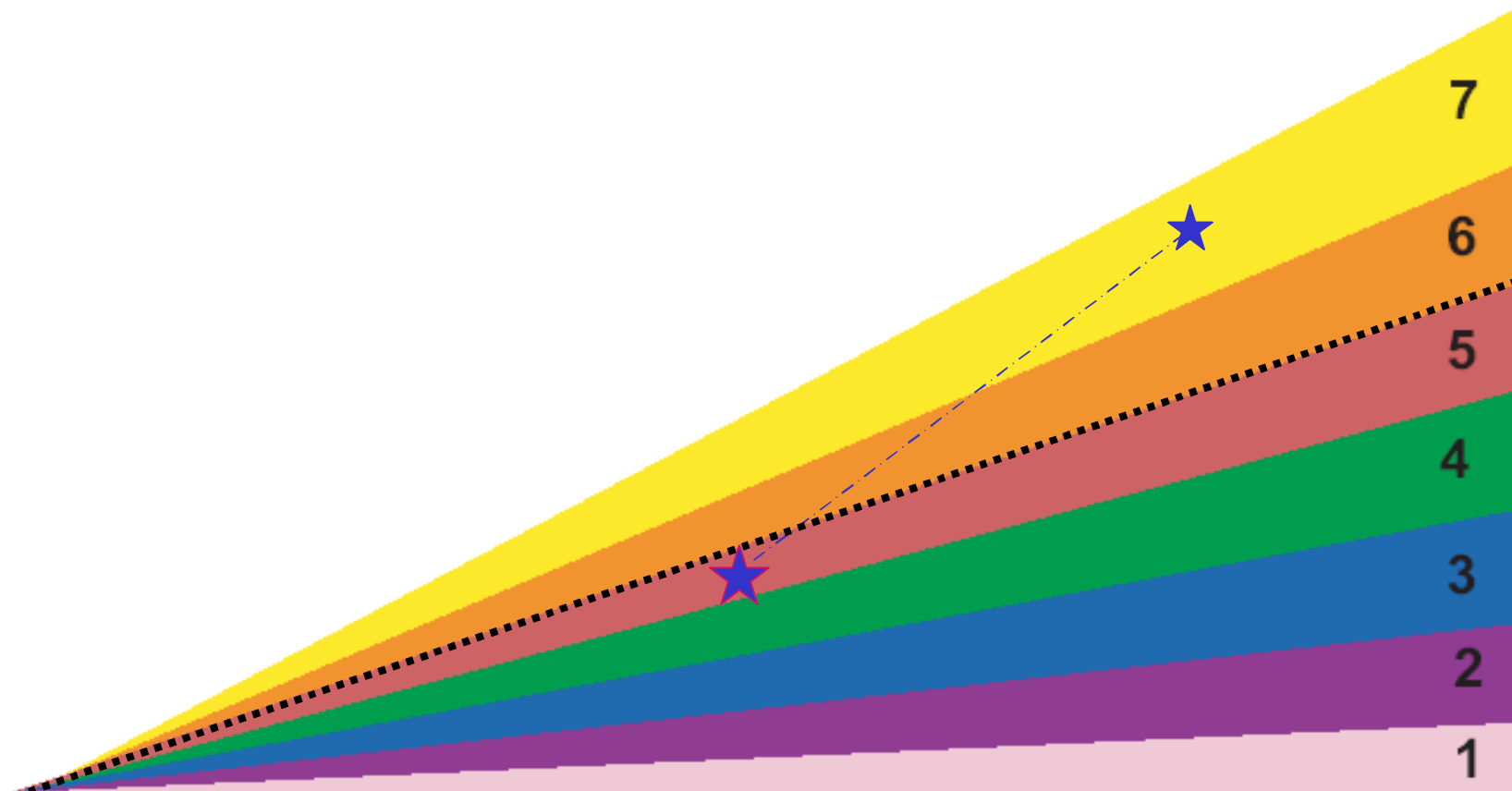
# The “d” category

d. Percent of preschool children who improved functioning to reach a level comparable to same-aged peers

- Children who were functioning below age expectations when they entered the program but were functioning at age expectations when they left
- Started out below age expectations, but caught up while in services



# Developmental Trajectories



Age in Months

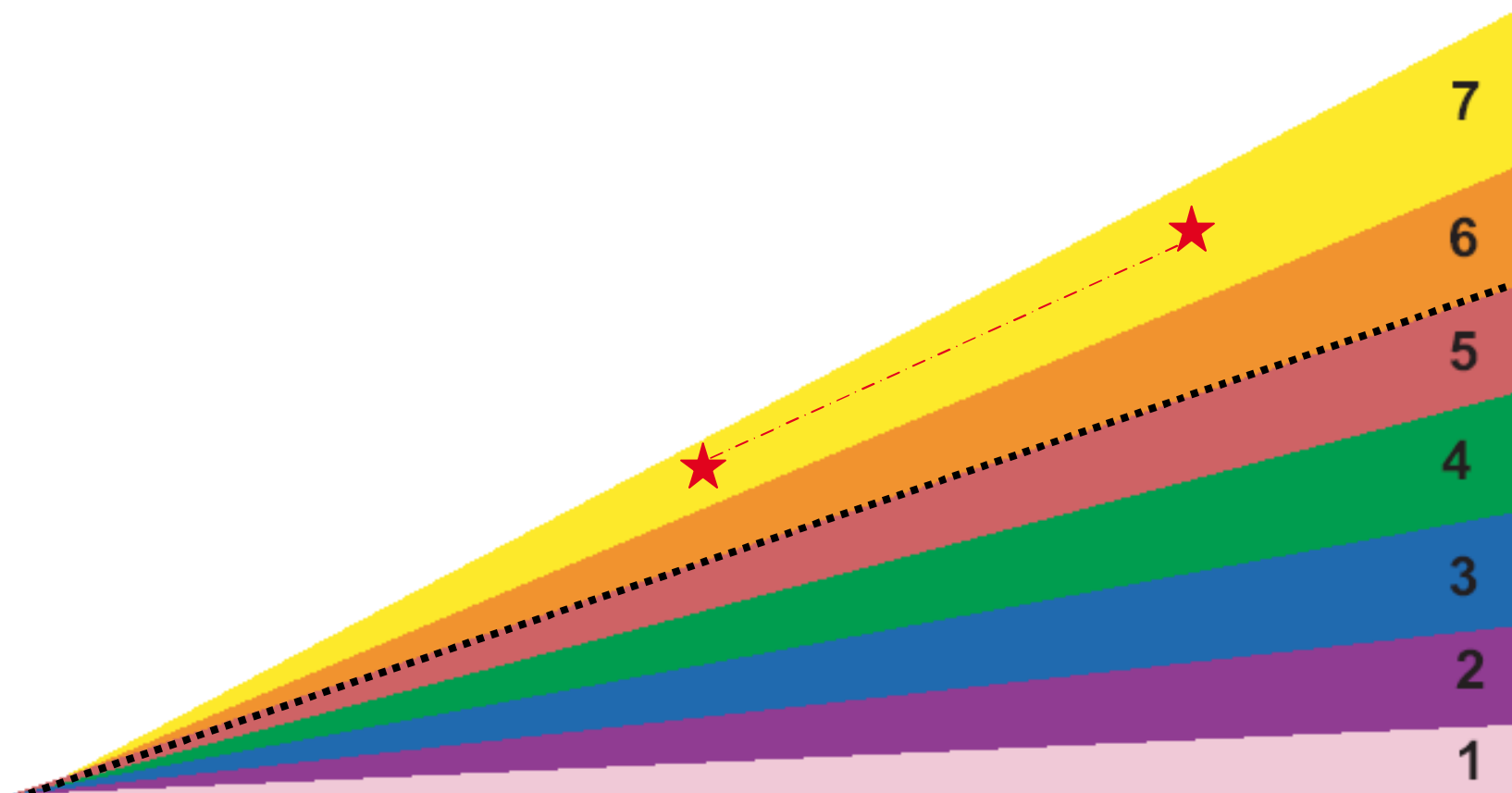
# The “e” category

e. Percent of preschool children who maintained functioning at a level comparable to same-aged peers

- Children who were functioning at age expectations when they entered the program and were functioning at age expectations when they left
- Entered the program at age expectations and were still up with age expectations at exit

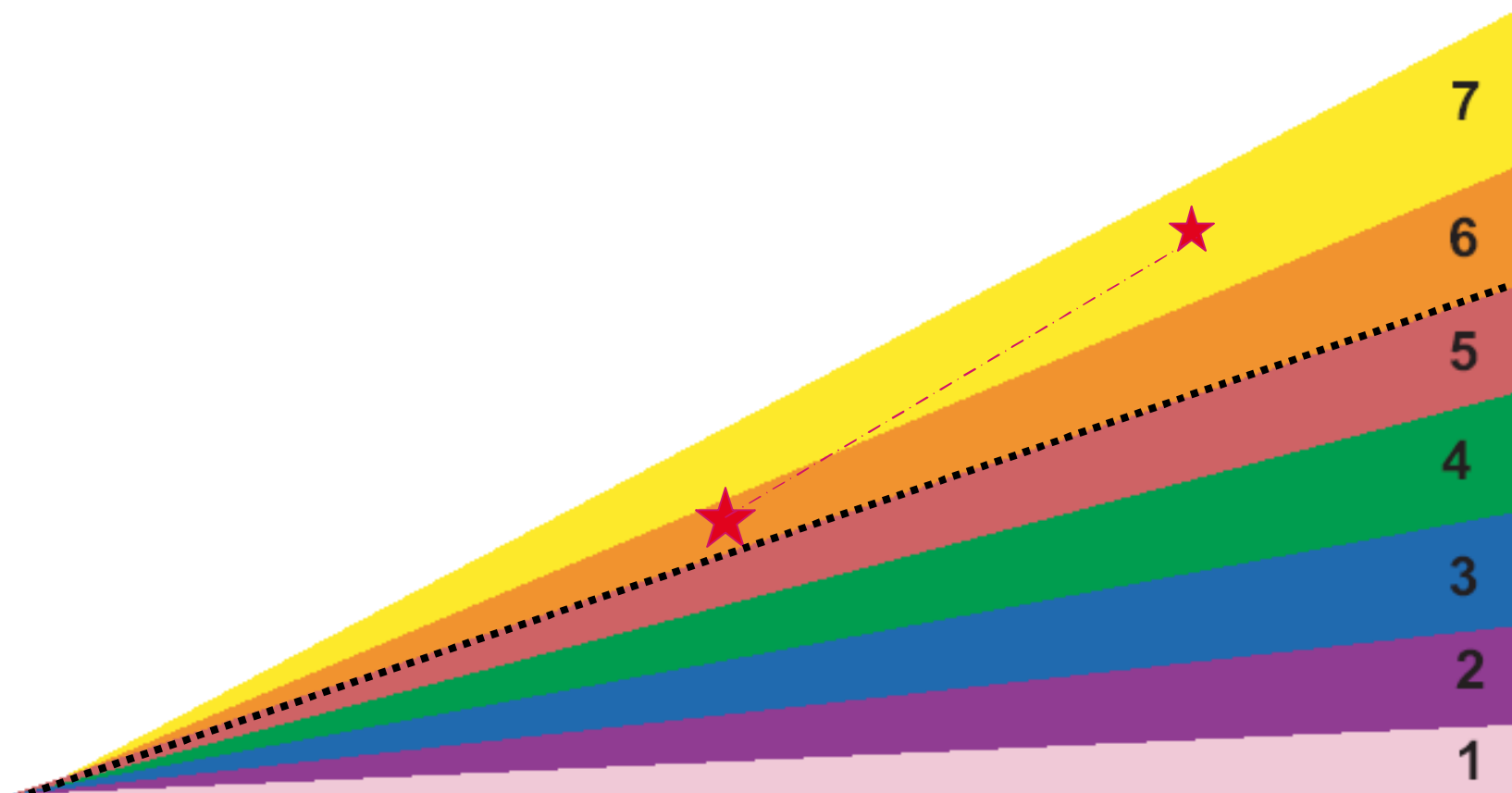


# Developmental Trajectories



**Age in Months**

# Developmental Trajectories



Age in Months

# For more information...

ECO website – [www.the-eco-center.org](http://www.the-eco-center.org)

